

## **“Inspiring Imps”: Programme Evaluation of a football intervention targeting mental ill health services users through a professional Football Club.**

The Active People survey (2010) shows that only 6.5% of disabled individuals participate in sport and exercise 3 times per week, compared with 16.5% of able bodied adults in the UK. Individuals with recognised disabilities have long been excluded from mainstream society. Particularly in sport, disability athletes can be afforded minority status and are treated as such (Nixon, 2000: In *Handbook of Sports Studies*, edited by J. Coakley and E. Dunning. London: Sage). This stigmatisation can be particularly acute among participants with diagnosed mental or psychological disabilities. Previous research concluded that sport can have positive psychological and social benefits, including improved well-being, motivation and social confidence (Crone and Guy, 2008: *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. 17, 197-207.).

The aim of the present study was to investigate the feasibility of a 6 week exercise programme targeting mental ill health service users aged 16+. A weekly 2 hour session of football was introduced to promote health and wellbeing in the target group. Partners included county Football Association and a professional football club. The project enhanced local partnerships and partnerships with other professional football clubs. The key remaining aim is to ensure a sustainable “legacy” is achieved to ensure the continuation delivery of the project.

The feasibility of the present study will be assessed using programme evaluation. Programme evaluation uses programme theory to produce a structured framework for assessment of the project (Rossi et al 2004; *Evaluation: A systematic Approach*. London, Sage). This allows a clear and logical progression from planning to implementation. Participant attrition rates and attendance records will be collected. These data will be supplemented with semi-structured interviews with participants and project stakeholders to assess programme development. The expected overall project outcome is to produce shared learning practice on similar interventions nationwide.

***Full Abstract to be submitted following data analysis.***

Nixon, H.L. (2000) Sport and disability in Coakley, J. and Dunning, E. (eds) *Handbook of Sports Studies* London: Sage

Crone, D. and Guy, H. (2008) ‘*I know it is only exercise, but to me it is something that keeps me going*’: A qualitative approach to understanding mental health service users’ experiences of sports therapy. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*. 17, pp.197-207.

Sport England (2010). *Active People Survey 4*. London: Sport England